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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000182

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - UPDATED CLS STMNT

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#) [ELECTIONS](#)
SUBJECT: ELECTIONS PARTNERS -- KEEPING PREPARATIONS ON TRACK

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CLASSIFIED BY AMB JOHN CAMPBELL, CL REASON 1.4 (B) (D)

REF: ABUJA 123

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The Ambassador met with representatives of IFES, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and PACT Nigeria on January 25 to discuss ongoing elections preparations efforts. INEC continues to register large numbers of voters in the final weeks of the registration exercise, claiming 43 million registered as of early in the week. Elections partners, however, are highly skeptical of these claims and remain concerned about the quality of data collected. IFES reported INEC is "very secretive and closed" and voiced concern that internal rivalries may hinder the effectiveness of the IFES technical team. NDI, IFES and PACT were unanimously concerned over the current lack of an accreditation process for domestic monitors. They were specifically concerned that the Nigerian Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE), the leading coalition of civil society organizations monitoring elections, may be prohibited from registering as a result of bad blood between ACE and INEC. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador met with representatives of IFES, NDI and PACT Nigeria on January 25 in a regular venue to discuss elections preparations. The IFES representative said he remains skeptical of recent INEC claims that it has registered more than half the electorate (43 million). IFES reported there is no way to check the INEC claims or the quality of the data at present because all data is still located on individual direct data capture machines and laptops at registration sites (approximately 30,000 machines according to INEC). NDI called the INEC numbers "magic," saying such a turnaround in the process is unrealistic at best. NDI says its partners are still reporting problems finding registration sites and nonfunctional registration machines.

¶3. (C) However, even if the numbers registered are accurate, the more troubling issue is data quality. Despite recent amendments to the Electoral Law which give INEC until February 14 to publish the voters list, the timeline for processing the data is extremely tight. IFES reported INEC plans to complete registration by January 31 (another 20-25 million registered in one week), after which it will have to compile and then process the data into ward lists for

posting. IFES believes this "posting period" will likely not include a correction period, despite the legal requirement. The Electoral Law requires publication of the final voters list by February 14 (60 days prior to the elections). NDI reported that the lack of transparency in scheduling for the display and potential correction of the lists has hindered their ability to conduct a planned "Check the List" campaign.

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¶4. (C) Despite a new "sense of urgency" within INEC, IFES said that both within INEC and among the three organizations consulting on data integration rivalries are hampering preparations. UNDP and IFES have both provided consultants on data integration; however, IFES says a third consultant, a Nigerian-American who is allegedly a friend of INEC Chairman Maurice Iwu's son, is running the show and keeping the other two NGOs at arms length. IFES also complained that UNDP had allowed INEC to screen their consultants, a process through which several consultants were refused in favor of "more acceptable alternatives." IFES said it has decided to keep its consultant on the ground, but reported the situation is so bad it threatens the efficacy of continued participation. In addition, IFES indicated there are serious communication problems within INEC upper management itself. According to IFES, the directors of the two departments responsible for the voter registration list and the electronic registration machines do not get along and, therefore, the departments do not regularly meet or consult.

¶5. (C) NDI and PACT Nigeria also reported problems between INEC Chairman Iwu and General Secretary Emma Ezeazu of the Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE), a coalition of NGOs working on elections monitoring and education. The two have long had a contentious relationship, but a recent volley of media statements and editorials has become increasingly personal and, as PACT has pointed out to Ezeazu, unprofessional. PACT has warned Ezeazu to tone down the

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rhetic and keep his statements factual in order to preserve credibility and remain effective in the monitoring process. NDI and PACT both worried that the spat could impact INEC's willingness to accredit ACE and/or other domestic NGOs as domestic monitors. With more than 120,000 polling stations, the approximately 60,000 domestic monitors expected are of considerable importance to the monitoring effort and will far outnumber international observers. INEC has not yet published guidelines for accreditation, despite IFES' efforts to push this issue forward.

¶6. (C) COMMENT. This is not the first instance of concerns regarding the quality of registration data collected. Even if registration numbers are good, poor data quality is a serious threat to the credibility of the list. Domestic monitors will be vital to the process as well and the importance of an accreditation process is clear. There has been no pressure from political parties for INEC to establish an accreditation process for monitors. This may be indicative of the political parties' desire to take advantage of the corrupt and opaque system for their own purposes. All present agreed it is premature for the U.S. to pressure INEC on the accreditation process. However, post will continue to watch this issue for possible action in the coming weeks.
END COMMENT.
CAMPBELL